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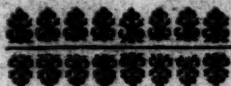
Impartial Account

Of the Word

MYSTERY,

As it is taken in the

Holy Scripture.



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An Impartial Account of the Word MYSTERY,
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S I R,

MYSTERY and Persecution are the Tutelar God and Goddess of the new Systems, framed by Worldly Christians. Upon those two Antichristian Principles they ground all their Arguments: *Mystery* makes up the Premises, and *Persecution* the Conclusion. They are indeed the two Characters of the Great Whore, arrayed in Purple and Scarlet Colour, because she is tainted with the Blood of the Martyrs: and she has upon her Forehead a Name written, *Mystery*, because under such a pretence she displays her most horrid Blasphemies. You tell me, Sir, that there have been in these last Ages several Learned Men, who have writ against Persecution, and unanswerably confuted so dismal an Opinion, and so contrary both to the Principles of Reason and Religion; and you are willing that I should only communicate my Thoughts to you concerning *Mystery*. I readily comply with your Wilhes, taking care of not running my self into too tedious a Discussion.

The word *Mystery*, which signifies in the general a *Hidden Thing*, is commonly taken for a Divine Secret: and I observe, that according to this Sense put upon it in Religion, both the Prophane and Sacred Writers afford us a different Notion of it. In the Pagan Theology the secret Worship of false Gods, was thus styl'd, such as was revealed only to some privileged Men, initiated into their Ceremonies, and so much conceal'd therein, as to conceal the Turpitude and Infamy thereof; but was kept secret from those, who were called prophane, because

they had Knowledge and Honesty enough to discover the Shamefulness and Ridiculousness of it. Such were the Mysteries of *Ceres*, and the little Mysteries of her Daughter *Proserpina*. In *Egypt* in the Temple of *Isis* and *Serapis* stood *Harpoerates*, the God of Silence, placed near the Images of those two Gods; with his Fingers upon his Lips, to let devout Men know that it was a kind of Sacrilege to divulge the Secrets of Religion, and that the Priests might learn to keep secret that *Isis* and *Serapis* had been *Men*. So sacred and dangerous was the Discovery of Mysteries to Ecclesiastical Men of that time, as well as to ours: and such is the Love of superstitious People, of what Religion soever they be, for Cabal and Mystery; because they take delight in admiring what they do not understand, and in reverencing the very Silence of any thing that goes under the Name of Mystery. The Heathens carried this Abuse so far, that they bestowed the Name of Mystery upon the very Passions and Lewdness of their Gods; as it is observed by *Abragoras* (*Ligeo pro Christo*): then Mystery was the Cloak of Debauchery, as it is now adays the Vail of Absurdities.

That Silence was accounted so sacred, that *Norain*, tho he was no Elgon, look'd upon the breaking of it as the highest Crime, *Lib. 3. Od. 2.*

*Est & falli tuta Silentio
 Interit: vitabo, qui Curris sacrum
 Vulgare Arcane, sub isdem
 Sic viribus, fragilissimæ micæ
 Solus Phlegmæ.*

"A strict Silence, says he, shall certainly be rewarded: for my part, if any Man had revealed the Sacred Mysteries of *Chris*, I would not venture to converse familiarly with him, tho' we dwelt in the same House, or sailed in the same Ship. There were at that time Rewards and Punishments established to keep the Priests in a Religious Silence. And you must observe, Sir, that indiscreet Men were then dealt with, just as our Excommunicated Men are now adays, or the pretended Hereticks, who pay no respect to Mysteries. They shunn'd their Company, and were afraid to meet with them under the same Roof. That Polltick Mystery does not much differ from a Religious Mystery. As those who are troubled with an Ulcer do carefully wrap up the affected Member, lest any thing should hurt it, or its Nastiness should offend Peoples Eyes: Thus in Religion Men take care to disguise and adorn the most monstrous Opinions, which are like the Ulcer, or the Itch thereof, and shew a particular regard to them. They look upon them as the beloved part and the chief of Religion: And lest they should be attack'd in that weak place, they fence it with the Name of *Mystery*. They will allow no body to touch them, nor to call their Eyes upon them; and as soon as any Man is ready to bring to light the Shamefulness of those darling Opinions, they cry out presently, He is an Heretic, a Blasphemer, an Impious Man. He that undertakes to attack an Orthodox that way, is look'd upon as one who designs the utter ruin of Religion. They are so far in the right, seeing they cannot otherwise defend their Opinions, than by frighting Children with the Wolf's Skin.

However the Custom of hiding Mysteries sprung rather from that Polltick Silence, than from *Pythagoras*'s Philosophy, either among the ancient Hereticks who were ashamed of the Mystery of the Cross, or of the *Mystery of the Crucifix*, (as the Fathers style in *Vid. Jusin. Dial. cum Tryph.*) and durst scarce confess that he was a Man, or among those who are stiled the Fathers of the Church, who

kept secret from uninitiated *Catholics* the dreadful Mysteries, as they call them, being ashamed of the Simplicity wherewith the Sacrament of the Eucharist had been instituted. The former under the colour of a Mystery, have so far annihilated the Sufferings and the Flesh of Christ, that they left nothing to be perceived in him but an Infinite and Eternal Nature, which removed from the Jews the Scandal of his Cross. Thus *St. Hilary*, the great Defender of the *Nicene Faith*, affirms, that our Blessed Saviour was free from Fear, Pain and Sorrow, vindicating against the *Arians* his Eternal Divinity at the cost of his Humanity, which he thinks to be but a Fancalain; *Putatio*, says he, *dolor, quia passus; tunc vero doloris non est, quia Deus est.* (in *Psal.* 138.) "One would think that he feels some Pain, because he suffers; but indeed he is free from Pain, because he is God. As for the ancient Cathedrists, they have been so careful to prevent their Proselytes by those great words of *Dreadful Mysteries*, that those poor People when admitted unto the Lord's Supper, thought they neither saw Bread nor Wine, nor any thing that might appear vile to the Eyes of wise Heathens by reason of its meanness. From these two Sources sprang up those two *Mysteries* which have the highest place in the Christian Religion, I mean, *Consubstantiality* and *Transubstantiation*.

"2. I come in the second place to the sacred Writers. By the word *Mystery*, they mean only a Doctrine, or an Event, which is as yet shut up in God's Decree, or does appear to Men only under the covering of a Prophetick Prediction, a Parable, a Symbol, a Type, or such like *Enigmastick Figures*; but is afterwards brought to light either by a clearer Revelation, or the Accomplishment thereof: So that the same Truth that has been a Secret during a certain time, and in respect of such a People, becomes in the time fixed by the Decree, and in respect of another People, an uncovered Truth. It is therefore absolutely necessary to distinguish the times, the time of the Mystery, and the time of the Revelation; and the Persons

not; that which is a Mystery to some, being a clear and distinct Revelation to others. This I desire you to observe, that you may perceive at first sight, that the Scripture does never call *Mystery*, a Thing incomprehensible in itself, tho never so much revealed. This Notion of a *Mystery* is unknown to all sorts of Authors, both Sacred and Profane. A *Mystery* is called so by the former, only in respect of certain Circumstances of Time, Persons, the manner of the Revelation, &c. Take your Concordance, and see all the places of the New Testament, wherein that word is made use of, you will be amaz'd to meet with none that excites in the Mind the Idea of a Truth inconsistent with the Natural Light of Sense and Reason. I will confine my self to the New Testament, because, as our Divines do present, that Dispensation is most fruitful in such Mysteries.

To make this the more intelligible, I shall rank all those places under three Heads. The first contains those wherein the Doctrines, the Success, or the Events of the Gospel are covered with Parables and Symbolical Terms. The second contains those wherein are mentioned some Secrets, wherewith God has intrusted some privileged Prophets of his new Covenant. The third sets before us those, wherein are described God's general Dispensations concerning Mens Salvation, advancing from a dark and imperfect State, to a clear and perfect Revelation.

I. The Doctrines, the Success, or the Events of the Gospel are called *Mysteries*, because they are covered with Parables and Symbolical Terms. The first place that offers itself to our Enquiry, is *Math. 13. 11* where in our Saviour tells his Disciples, that it is given unto them to know the *Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven*, but unto others all things are done in Parables. Here the Doctrines of the Kingdom of God are called *Mysteries*, not because they are Incomprehensible to themselves and absolutely incredible to Reason, but accidentally. 1. Because they are wrapped up in Parables. 2. Because they are propounded to ineurable Men, and unwor-

thy to be taught in the most intelligible way. But after all, they are revealed and discovered Mysteries to those who were teachable, and enquired for Instruction: Such were the Disciples of Christ, to whom it is given to know the *Mysteries*, God revealing them to those who love him, as the Apostle saith, We read the same, *Mar. 4. 11*: wherein about the same matter relating to Parables, Christ calls *Mysteries* the admirable ways of the Divine Wisdom in order to the discovering of his Will, and the various Success which shall attend his Revelation, both in respect of the Jews and the Gentiles. The third place is to be found *Luke 8. 10*: and is the same with the two foregoing. Unto you it is given, says Christ to his Disciples, to know the *Mysteries*; &c. whereby you may further see that they are Mysteries to be known by those, who already made a right use not only of those clear and easy Precepts, which are the first Elements of Piety, but of the most important and necessary Truths in order to Salvation.

We may place here all the Doctrines and all the Events, covered either with Types and Figures, or with Prophetick Visions and Enigms, or with some weak Beginnings, which are like a Seed, wherein they are not yet perceptible. Such is that great *Mystery* concerning Christ and his Church, of which the Union of the Husband and his Wife is a Type and a Figure, because it is an Emblem of the most intimate and indissoluble Union, *Eph. 5. 32*. Such is the *Mystery of the seven Stars*, whereby are meant the seven Angels, or the seven Bishops of the Churches, of whom the Stars were a Type and an Emblem, *Apoc. 1. 20*. Such is the *Mystery of God* concerning the future State of his Church, represented in the Visions of St. John, but which is to have its Accomplishment in the time established by his Decree, *Apoc. 10. 7*. Such is the *Mystery of the Woman* and of the Beast, *Apoc. 17. 7*, and the *Mystery of Iniquity*, *2 Thess. 2. 7*. The one hidden in Prophetick Characters, whereby it is drawn out beforehand but after an obscure way. The other, which is but beginning, working secretly by

Mystical

tion of the Gentiles, &c. is clearly revealed under the Gospel: The Doctrine of Salvation, which were before hidden either in Gods Decree, or in the Promises made to the Fathers, or in the Types of the Law, or in the Predictions of the Prophets, as in their Seed, are now delivered in a most evident manner by the Apostles and the Prophets of the Lord, to whom they have been fully revealed by the Spirit of the Lord. Any that can but read, will soon perceive in these places so clear and so palpable a Truth. The other are more generally expressed, wherein that *Mystery* is called only, *the Mystery of God*, *the Mystery of Christ*, *the Mystery of the Gospel*, *the Mystery of Faith*, *the Mystery of Godliness*. But besides the words of *discussing* and *manifesting*, which are often joined in those general Expressions, every body may plainly see, that those great Titles are Eudæmonisms and Honourable Names, wherewith the Apostles adorn the Evangelical Dispensation, and that being put together, the meaning of them is only, that the Gospel is the Secret of God's Will, which has been revealed by Christ, and propounded to our Faith to be the Rule of our Piety and Obedience.

But perhaps you are willing, Sir, that I should explain those places one after another. This will be no hard matter after the two general Reflections which I make already. I begin with those wherein the Vocation of the Gentiles is more expressly contained.

Rom. 16. 25, 26. *Now to him that is of Power to establish us according to my Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the Revelation of the Mystery, which was kept secret since the World began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the Prophets, according to the Commandments of the Everlasting God, unto the obedience of all Nations for the Obedience of Faith.* &c. St. Paul calls in this place the Gospel the Revelation of a *Mystery*, a *Mystery* hidden both to Men and Angels in all the preceding Ages, but at that time a *Mystery* manifested by his preaching, which has unfolded the ancient Prophecies, and brought to light the Secret of the Vocation of the Gentiles,

which had been but obscurely foretold by the Prophets.

1 Cor. 2. 7, 10. *But we speak the Wisdom of God in a Mystery, even the hidden Wisdom which God ordained before the World knew the Glory.* Ver. 10. *But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.* The Apostle speaks still in the place of the Gospel's Dispensation, which he calls *the Wisdom of God in a Mystery*, which God kept to himself in the Secret of his Counsel before there were either Men or Angels, to whom he might communicate it, but which he prepared nevertheless from that very time, for the Glory and Happiness of his Children, and which at last he has revealed by his Spirit, that we may have a clear and efficacious knowledge of it, and be thereby led to the worshipping of him.

Eph. 1. 9, 10. *Having made known unto us the Mystery of his Will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself: That in the Dispensation of the fulness of Times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on Earth, even in him.* The *Mystery* spoken of in this place is a *Mystery of God's Will*. This Will consists in gathering the Gentiles by calling them to the Faith of Christ, and in raising up all the *Indwellers of Heaven and Earth into one Family*, and under the Head, viz. Christ. God, who from all Eternity designed this great Work with himself, has dispensed it by his own Son in the fulness of Times, as the Apostle speaks here; or when the fulness of Time was come, as he says Gal. 4. 4. That is to say, in the Time fixed by God's Decree, which is a time of Revelation and of Light, as the foregoing Times were Times of Mystery.

Eph. 3. 3, 4, 5, 9, 10. *How that by Revelation he made known unto us the Mystery (as I have said in few words, whereby when ye read ye may understand my Reasoning in the Mystery of God) which in other Ages was not made known unto the Saints of Israel, as it is now revealed unto his holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellow*

heirs,

Heirs, and of the same Body, and Partakers together of his Promises in Christ, by the Gospel. Yet, 9. *and to make all Men see, what is the Fellowship of the Mystery, which from the beginning of the World has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the Principalties and Powers in Heavenly Places, might be known by the Church the manifold Wisdom of God.* This place may serve for a Commentary upon all the other, to clearly the Apostle explains his Mind in it. The Mystery spoken of by him is a Secret concerning the Salvation of the Gentiles, fellow-Heirs of the Divine Promises with the Jews, and Partakers of the same Graces, and Members of the same Body, in the Fellowship of the same Spirit. This was a Secret unknown to Men and Angels, but thoroughly made known to the Apostles by God's Revelation, to the Prophets of the New Testament by the Holy Ghost, and even to Angels by the means of the Church. Indeed St. Paul calls this Mystery the Incalculable Riches of Christ. But does he mean thereby, that they are such Doctrines as Reason cannot attain to, to obscure and so contrary to its Light? God forbid we should ascribe to him so unreasonable a Sense! In his Sense, and according to the Genius of all his Epistles, they are Graces and Blessings of Christ so rich and so plentiful, that they are extended even to the Nations, which had been hitherto accounted the most profane and unworthy of God's Mercy. They are Blessings so much above our Admiration and our Praises, that our Minds are confounded with the Excellency, the Extent, and the number of them. In such a Sense we grant that there are some Mysteries in the Christian Religion, some incomprehensible Secrets; Secrets of Salvation, and Mysteries of Love, which may be compared to a bottomless Sea.

Col. 1. 26, 27. *Even the Mystery which has been hid from Ages, and from Generations, but now is made manifest to his Saints: To whom God would make known what is the Riches of the Glory of this Mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you the hope of Glory,*

This Text needs no Paraphrase. The Apostle calls here a Mystery the Will of God, whereby he is willing to save all Nations indifferently, which he will make a proper and peculiar People to himself, not by Circumcision and other Ceremonies of the Law, but by the purifying of them only through the Faith of Christ. He makes here the same Distinction as in all the other places which we have examin'd; and which puts an end to our Question, viz. That what was a Mystery, or Doctrine hidden in all the Ages which preceded the Gospel, is now discovered to the Saints, to the Apostles and to the Prophets of the Lord, to whom God has been pleased to make known the glorious Riches of his Mercy, which he bestows upon the Gentiles. And he adds in express words, that this Mystery is nothing but Christ himself, whom they have received, and who has brought to them by his magnificent Promises the certain hopes of Glory.

I come now to those Texts wherein the Mystery of the Gospel is mentioned in a more general manner.

1 Cor. 4. 1. *Let a Man's account of us, as of the Ministers of Christ, and Stewards of the Mysteries of God.* Who does not perceive at first sight, that the Title which the Apostles ascribe to themselves, of being the Stewards of the Mysteries of God, is the same with the immediately foregoing of being the Ministers of Christ? As if they should say, We are the Ministers of Christ, who dispense the Treasures of his Knowledge, and the Purposes of God concerning the Salvation of Mankind: Purposes hitherto kept secret, but we have been intrusted with the Revelation of them. God had as it were made a rich Store of Graces, which he kept in his own Bosom, out of which the Apostles his faithful Stewards dispense them to those for whom they were designed. And God by their preaching lays his Bowels of Mercy open to us, and displays to our Eyes the vast Riches of his Grace, and of his Salvation.

Eph. 6. 19. *And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my Mouth boldly, to make known the Mystery of the Gospel,*

The

The preaching of St. Paul is here called in express words the *Mystery* of the Gospel, that is, the Revelation of Salvation. The Apostle says, that tho he be loaded with Chains, for having declared to the Gentiles the Secret of Mercy, yet he goes on in the performance of his Ministry with freedom and boldness, laying open to all Men the blessed Immortality attainable by the Faith of Christ.

Col. 2. 2. *That their Hearts might be comforted, being knit together in Love, and unto all the Riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the Mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.* It cannot be doubted but that this *Mystery of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ*, spoken of in this place, is also the Gospel-Dispensation concerning the Salvation of all Mankind, which the Father has revealed to us by the Ministry of his Son. For besides, that this is the ordinary Style of the Apostle, as often as he is discoursing of this Divine Will, and that it is the Sense, which he has fixed upon the words [*Mystery of God and of Jesus Christ*] as we have seen in the places before explained, Besides that, I say, this does appear from the very words of the Text, which offers to us an Object that may be known to us, and which we may have not only the knowledge of, but a firm and certain Knowledge, not only some Knowledge, but Riches of Knowledge, that is, a full Knowledge, which takes off all Obscurity and Doubts.

Col. 4. 3. *Withal, praying also for us, that God would open unto us a Door of Utterance, to speak the Mystery of Christ, for which I am also in Bonds.* This place is parallel to Eph. 6. 19. which we have explained. You see in both places the Apostle in Bonds, he intreats his Brethren to pray for him, that God would be pleased to unloose his Tongue, to open a Door to him, and to grant him an opportunity of freely preaching the *Mystery of Jesus Christ*, or of the Gospel; that is to say, the Doctrine of Salvation by the Faith of Christ. And he mentions, *ver. 4.* not only the preaching of it, but also the discovering of it to Men, as a Secret which he

ought to make them Partakers of.

1 Tim. 3. 9. *Holding the Mystery of the Faith in a pure Conscience.* Ver. 16. *And without controversy, great is the Mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in the Flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of Angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the World, received up into Glory.* The *Mystery of Faith* and the *Mystery of Godliness* signifies here the *Mystery of the Christian Faith* and *Godliness* in the same Sense (the reason of Contraries being observed) as the *Mystery of Iniquity*, 2 Thess. 2. 7. The Christian Faith was in preceding Ages a hidden Secret, and kept under the obscurity of the Prophecies, and Shadows of the Law: and the Apostle will have it in this place, by a fine and elegant Allusion, to be held and kept in a good Conscience as in a precious Vessel; that is to say, that Faith and Righteousness be indissolubly united, otherwise Faith will soon become shipwreck'd, unless it be made steadfast by a good Conscience. Wherefore we are exhorted to make sure our Vocations and Election by good Works.

- I have confounded those two places, because there seems to be no more *Mystery* in the one than in the other; yet I think my self obliged to examine more particularly the latter, and that because it seems to favour a little the Notion of a *Mystery* which I am confuting. Without controversy, great is the *Mystery of Godliness*, God was manifest in the Flesh, &c. 1 Tim. 3. 16. This seems to countenance the *Mystery* of the Incarnation, as they call it. It seems, I say, for there is no reality in it.

For, First, It is more likely that the word *God* has been foisted into the Original. We have good reason to believe this, and I intend to shew you that the Apostle speaks here of the *Mystery of Godliness*, or rather of the Gospel.

1. Many Greek Copies, the most ancient and the most considerable, the Oriental Versions, the Vulgar, and some Fathers, read constantly *which* instead of *God*. *Great is the Mystery of Godliness*, [which] was manifested in the Flesh, &c. This is there-

fore the Secret of the Gospel, the great Secret of Salvation, which was preached up and delivered, nor by Angels, as the Law was, but by *Mortal Men*; nor by a conquering *Messias*, as the Jews expected he should be, but by one that underwent *Sufferings and Temptations*. Cannot the Orthodox triumph over the Hereticks without falsifying the Text of the Scripture, and leaving to the World a Shameful Monument of their want of Sincerity? The Latin Church has not falsified her Version, nor suffer'd that it should be falsified. Her Faith concerning this Mystery could not allow her to do that. Nor have the Hereticks falsified it, who were Masters of the ancient Copies, that remain to this day, and upon which; or such like, the Oriental and Occidental Versions of the Church were made. This is therefore a Miracle of God's Providence, who was pleas'd to preserve to us the precious Reminders of his Truth, notwithstanding the Endeavours of those who never loved it.

2. It is plain, that this Title, *the Mystery of Godliness*, is like the other which we have cited, and are undeniably ascribed to the Gospel, viz. *the Mystery of God, the Mystery of Christ, the Mystery of the Gospel, the Mystery of Faith*. In effect, in St. Paul's Sense, the word *Mystery* is constantly bestowed upon the great Secret of the Divine Love, concerning the Salvation of Mankind, especially of the Gentiles, which is the ordinary matter of his Transports, and Admiration. If the Doctrines, which go now under the Names of Astonishing Mysteries, had been look'd upon as such by that holy Man, how could he lay them aside, without shewing his Astonishment, and bestowing his Encomiums upon them? If it be replied, that he has done so in this place; then they must confess that this is the only place. But is there any likelihood that the holy Apostle should admire at every step the profound Riches of God's Mercy towards the Gentiles, as ravishing Mysteries, and that he should have cried out, O Mystery! but once, contemplating the incomprehensible Depths of the Trinity and the Incarnation?

It is more natural to think, that he has not changed the usual Idea which he ties to the word *Mystery*. And,

3. My third Argument will fully convince us of it. The same Qualities which are ascribed to the Doctrine of Salvation contained in the Gospel, and which are (if I may say so) inseparable from it in the Epistles of St. Paul, are here attributed to the *Mystery of Godliness*. It is called a *manifested Secret*, an Expression only suitable to God's Will; and *manifested in the Flesh*, that is, by the Flesh, (as *justified in the Spirit* signifies justified by the Spirit) God having put this Treasure in *Earthen Vessels*, or in *Fleshy Vessels*, which is all one. The *Flesh*, in the Style of the Hebrews, signifies not only *inferm and mortal Men*, but Men of a low and poor Condition, simple plain Men without Learning, without Greatness, without any Appearance, such as the Messias and his Apostles were, Men born of mean Parents, Carpenters, or Fishers, and who had never been bred up in Schools. But God has supported the Infirmary of his Ministers by the Greatness of the Miracles which they wrought. Thus the Apostle means by the words, *justified by the Spirit*, because by such means the weak and foolish things of God have confounded the Power and the Philosophy of this World, 1 Cor. 1.27. Now if you retain the word *God*, what would be the meaning of this Expression, *God justified by the Spirit*? What a strange Language! The Apostle adds, that this Secret was *seen of Angels*, who desired (saith St. Peter, 1 Pet. 1. 12.) to look into the Gospel, which has been preached to us, that it was preached to the Gentiles and believed in the World, which words do plainly shew that this Mystery is nothing else but the preaching of the Gospel out of the Borders of Judaea, and the Vocation of the Gentiles, that great Secret of God's Will, which did so much surprize the Apostles of our Lord, and which is in all the Epistles of St. Paul called a *Mystery*, whenever he treats of it. This certainly shews that he has not fixed a new Idea upon

on that word in this place, and that he always understands thereby a Miracle of God's Mercy, who calls his People those that were not his People, nor the pretended Mystery of the Incarnation, which never was the Subject of the Apostles preaching, nor the Object of the Faith of the Gentiles. Indeed one must be very subtle to find the Incarnation in the ancient Rules of their Faith, which they profess at their Baptism.

4. These words *received up into Glory*, cannot agree with the Exaltation of the incarnate Word. The Greek Phrase cannot bear such a sense (*ἀνελήφθη ἐν δόξῃ*, does not signify *receptus in Gloriam*, *received up into Glory*; but *receptus in Gloria vel cum Gloria*, *received with Glory*). From whence it follows, that it must be meant of God's Will revealed in the Gospel, which having been made manifest, was received with Glory and Applause, or embraced in a glorious and triumphing manner. I shall confirm this Explication with the words of *Erasmus* upon this place. *Mibi subleto* (says he) *Deum additum fuisse adversus Hæreticos Arianos. Cæterum mea quidem sententia, simplicissima fuerit interpretatio, si quis Mystrium intelligat prædicationem Evangelii, quod sept. alias Mystrium vocat, prius occultum, nunc manifestum universo Mundo*: That is, "I am apt to think that the word *God* was here added against the Hereticks the Arians. Now this seems to me the most simple Interpretation, if by the word *Mystery* we understand the preaching of the Gospel, which the Apostle calls often a Mystery in several other places, a Mystery before hidden and unknown, but now made manifest to all the World.

Secondly, Suppose we ought to read, *God was manifested in the Flesh*: that word *God*, especially when put without an Article, as it is here, signifies only God's Word, Doctrine, or Attributes, manifested by the preaching of Christ and his Apostles; as *Aristotle*, signifies the Philosophy of Aristotle; *Moses*, the Law of that Prophet; *Christ*, the Doctrine, or

the Gospel of Christ. This is clear of it self; and if we wanted some Testimonies, Doctor *Sherrlock* would afford us one in the very beginning of his Book concerning the Knowledge of Christ, where he fully proves this Truth. "*Christ* (says he) signifies the Gospel and Religion of Christ, as *Moses* signifies the Writings and Laws of *Moses*, and the Prophets the Writings and Sermons of the Prophets, *Luke* 16. 29, 31. And there is nothing more usual in common Speech, then to call any Law, or Religion, or Philosophy, by the Names of the first Authors. Thus *Gal.* 6. 15. *Col.* 2. 8. *Eph.* 4. 20, 21. where Christ must signify not the Person, but the Religion or Gospel of Christ. It remains therefore that I should produce some places, wherein the word *God* is put for the Will of God, or the Revelation of his Glorious Perfections. Dr. *Sherrlock* will also ease us of that labour; for he has done it in the same Book: He cites *Mat.* 11. 27. *No Man knows the Father save the Son*, &c. which he paraphrases thus. "God has now committed unto Christ all the secret Purposes of his Counsel concerning the Salvation of Mankind, which were concealed from Ages. None of the Prophets who lived before, did so fully understand it, nor have we any other certain way of knowing this, but by the Revelation which Christ has made to us. And *John* 14. 7. *If ye had known me, ye should have known the Father, also*, &c. *Whoever knows me*, i. e. (says the Author) whoever is acquainted with the Doctrine and Religion I preach, knows my Father, i. e. is thoroughly instructed in God's Mind and Will. So that to know God, is to understand the Will of God, concerning the Salvation of Mankind. And *Heb.* 1. 3. *The Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person*. These Discoveries, says that Author, Christ has made of God, being a bright and glorious Reflection of the Nature and Attributes of God, of his Eternal Wisdom, and Truth and Holiness, are as true a Representation of the

" Divine Nature and Will, as any Picture
 " is of the Person it represents. It is plain
 " that in this sense Christ is called the *Image*
 " of God, 2 Cor. 4. 4. where Christ being
 " the Image of God comes in very abruptly,
 " unless we understand it in this sense,
 " that he is the Image of God, with re-
 " spect to the glorious Revelations of the
 " Gospel, which contain a true and faith-
 " ful account of God's Nature and Will.
 " And *Joh. 1. 18. No Man hath seen God*
 " *at any time, &c.* That is, says the Author,
 " no Man ever before had so perfect a
 " knowledge of the Will of God, (which is
 " here called seeing God, because Sight
 " gives us the clearest Evidence, and the
 " most perfect and particular Knowledge)
 " but the Son of God, who perfectly un-
 " derstood all his most secret Counsels, hath
 " perfectly declared the Will of his Fa-
 " ther to us. So *Joh. 1. 16. And of his*
 " *Fulness have all we received, &c.* And *Col. 2. 9.*
 " *In him dwellth all the Fulness of the Godhead*
 " *bodily,* are explained by the Author thus:
 " 'Tis not the Personal Fulness we are to
 " attend to, but the Fulness and Perfection
 " of the Gospel, from whence we must
 " fetch the Knowledge of the Divine Will.
 " The Fulness of the Godhead is an Allu-
 " sive and Metaphorical Expression; for
 " God, who is a Spirit, cannot, in a pro-
 " per sense, dwell bodily in any thing.
 " I hope now no body will wonder, that by
 " these words, *God was manifested in the Flesh,* I
 " should understand only the Grace and the
 " Will of God, which have been manifested
 " unto us by the preaching of a *Messias,* and
 " of a company of Fishermen, who neither
 " were strong nor noble according to the *Flesh,*
 " no more than their Profelytes, 1 Cor. 1. 20.
 " Which shews that our Copies, though differ-
 " ing in words, yet agree in sense; because
 " as often as God manifests his Designs, espe-
 " cially the Secrets of his Love, and of his
 " Mercy, such as he reveals them in Christ
 " Jesus, with a shining Glory and a plenti-
 " ful Profusion, then God manifests himself,
 " and makes himself visible to Men, display-
 " ing to their Eyes through those Images all

the Riches of his Glory, Wisdom, Power,
 Love and Faithfulness.

Now to put an end to the Explication
 of all those places, there remains only one
 Question to be answered, *viz.* Why the
 Gospel, being the clearest and the most
 perfect of all Revelations, is called a *My-*
stery? Besides several particular Reasons,
 which I have before mentioned in examin-
 ing every place by it self, I shall here in-
 sist upon two general ones.

1. This Speech is like that which we
 make use of, when we call a Secret still,
 a Design which we have communicated to
 some Persons, whilst it lies hidden to some
 others, and that we say, *such and such are*
intrusted with my Secret, few are intrusted
with my Secret. The Gospel being in effect
 a Secret of God's Will revealed to certain
 Nations, but hidden to others, to whom,
 comparatively to those who know it al-
 ready, it is a Mystery still.

2. It is called so in the same sense that
 it is said, *the Blind see,* being styld blind
 after they have recovered their Sight; a
 blind Man seeing, and a Mystery revealed,
 being like Expressions: and in the same
 sense that *Harlots* are said to go before others
 into the Kingdom of God, being called Har-
 lots even after their Conversion. The Scrip-
 tures are full of the like Expressions. Thus
 Mysteries, though revealed, are called My-
 steries still, to commend thereby the Grace
 and Love of God towards those to whom
 he imparts his Secrets. All this is a Con-
 firmation of my foregoing Observation, that
 the Mystery of God is nothing less than
 a thing unintelligible and incomprehensible
 to Reason, and least of all an Object which
 contradicts and destroys our Natural Ideas.
 It is called so only with respect to some
 Circumstances of Time, Place and Person.

However, all these Mysteries, as long as
 they continue to be Mysteries, and God
 has some Reasons to hide his Designs with
 the Obscurity of Prophecies, and to cover
 them with a Vail, do not bind Christians
 to have a clear and distinct Faith and Know-
 ledg concerning the Objects contained in
 them,

them, under pain of Damnation. When the Object is void, Faith must needs be confused and impieine. This is the unjust Practice of Divines, to damn, with their own Authority, the supposed Haretiicks, who refuse to embrace in an explicit manner Mysteries, which, supposing them to be true, are so incomprehensible (as they own themselves) that for that very reason they are capable of no Interpretation, nor consequently, fit to be distinctly believed. Those false Mysteries have no ground in the New Testament, as I have shewed, to appropriate that Title to themselves, except it be in the first Epistle to the *Corinthians*, Chap. 14. 2. the only Passage which remains to be examined; where the Apostle, discoursing of him who speaks in an unknown Tongue, says, that is the Spirit he speaketh Mysteries. Indeed their Metaphysical Gibberish is a Barbarous and unknown Tongue, full of those Mysteries in Spirit, and of frighting Absurdities. By the means of Mystery, Divines have made Religion a very difficult thing, that is, an Art which Christians are not able to understand. *Ex Religione Ars facta*, says *Grotius*, (*De Ver. Relig. Christi*, lib. 6.) Thereby they raised themselves above common Christians, and are made necessary to the People, improving that Art to their own benefit. If Religion were easy, and without any encumbrance, then every one should be Doctor to himself. But Clergymen have done like Physicians, who have kept still to *Nippomate's* extravagant Expressions, and make use of far-fetch'd Drugs, lest their Art become too common in using Herbs of our own Gardens, and Terms of our vulgar Tongue. Christianity is by that means nothing else, but the Religion of Learned Men, and of the most subtle and refin'd Philosophers. Those are esteem'd the most excellent Christians, who believe most Mysteries. Men will by no means have a Religion of a level, which neither ascends into Heaven, nor descends into the Deep, and whose whole Mystery is nigh us, in the Faith of the Heart, and in the Con-

fession of the Mouth. If thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine Heart, that God has rais'd him from the Dead, thou shalt be saved. *Rom. 10. 9.* This has been rightly observed by *Dr. Sherlock* himself in his Book of the Knowledge of Christ, p. 298. "Let us leave, says he, those dim Notions to Men who can believe what no Men can understand, who despise every thing that can be understood, as if it were no better than Carnal Reason. Desiring to be Teachers of the Law (says *St. Paul*, 1 *Tim. 1. 7.*) understanding neither what they say, nor wherof they affirm."

We may therefore conclude, Sir, that the Gospel is so far from being a Mystery and a Secret, that it is the most evident and the clearest of all Revelations. Divine Truth is not hid in a Well, as *Democritus* saith: it is like a City standing upon a Hill, which may be seen of all Men. Christ has brought all things to light, and as the Woman of *Samaritis* speaks, *He has taught us all things.* He is called a Word, not a Silence; his Gospel is a Revelation, not a Mystery: Indeed he forbids us to cast his holy Doctrine before Dogs and Swine; but on the other hand, he will have it to be made plain and intelligible to any Man, who heartily desires to know it. We ought to leave that covered and mystical Philosophy to *Heracleitus*, who was wont to tell his Disciples, *Darken your Thoughts, and never express your selves but enigmatically, lest you should be understood of the People.* Such an Affectation of Obscurity was the occasion of *Aristotle's* being called a Sphinx, who did always propound inexplicable Riddles: Nay, it is reported, that by that means he insinuated himself into *Alexander's* Favour, and comforted that Prince, who was afraid lest the Mysteries of the *Acroamatick* Philosophy should grow too common. I know it is commonly said, that there are some Mysteries which Christ did not teach, because they were too high and too sublime for the Church, which was then in her Infancy, and consequently, that the perfect Revela-

tion thereof was deferr'd till the coming down of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles, and thereupon they cite *John*. 16. 12, 13. But Dr. *Sherlock* will answer this for me; for he says in the Book before mentioned, "That this place does not speak of any Doctrine necessary to Salvation, but only of certain Instructions relating to the Nature or Extent of the Apostle's Ministry: As for Example, the Vocation of the Gentiles, which is often called a Mystery, and consequently, that the perfect Revelation thereof could not be deferr'd to a more seasonable time. For, *as he goes on*, if the Apostles had preached any other thing in matters relating to Salvation, than what Christ had taught them, they should have preached another Gospel, which was to be rejected, *Gal.* 1. 8, 9. *He adds*, This I do not say to lessen the Authority of the Apostles, who could teach nothing but what they had learn'd; nor make any Doctrine necessary, but what was made such by Christ: But to awaken those Men who take little notice of the Gospel of our Saviour, while they fetch all their mysterious Divinity out of some obscure Passages of St. Paul's Epistles, 2 Pet. 3. 16. Yet upon those obscure places they ground their Faith, without taking care to consider, whether they agree with the Gospel of Christ, which is the first Rule, and yet is perfectly silent about those pretended grounds. If therefore we must examine the very Passages of the Apostles according to this Rule, how much more the mysterious Terms contrived by the Councils and Divines?

I do not know from whence they fetch that Spirit of Mystery. Certainly the reading of the Gospel will never suggest it, seeing the Holy Ghost does his utmost Endeavour to make the Revelation as plain and intelligible to us as can be. As for Doctrines, the Doctrine of the Cross, which is a *Stumbling-block to the Jews, and Foolishness to the Greeks*, it is set therein before us with the greatest Evidence, and we see all

at once the whole Wisdom of its Scope, Uses, Effects, &c. As for the invisible Promise of a future Life: he makes us to handle it with St. *Thomas* in the Wounds of Christ raised from the Dead, after he had suffer'd for God's sake. As for Precepts; God has sent us a Preacher, who first observes them, before he imposes them upon others, and thro' the Pattern of his Obedience which he left to us, he plainly lets us see the possibility thereof. Every thing therefore is plain in the Divine Revelation, and instead of spiritualizing sensible things, it makes the most spiritual and imperceptible things, plain and sensible to us: God himself, though invisible, manifesting himself in Jesus Christ, who is his Character and visible Image. God, who could have sent Angels to us (which would be suitable to the mystical and abstruse Doctrines of Divines) to teach us the Tongue of Angels, and acquaint us with their System, has been willing to accommodate himself to our limited Knowledge, by sending us a Man like unto us, who spake the Language of Men, and who did so far condescend in the System of Doctrine, which he left to us, that we may not only say, that we heard him with our Ears, but saw him with our Eyes, and handled him with our Hands. Besides, God who might have sent us some Philosophers, acquainted with *Plato's* and *Aristotle's* Notions, was willing to comply with the meanness of our Minds by causing his Gospel to be preached by Publicans and Fishermen of *Galilee*, who never heard of *Consubstantiality* and *Hypostasis*, and yet less of *Perichoresis* and *Apotheosis*. Hereupon Dr. *Sherlock's* Astonishment is worth the noting (*Ubi sup.* p. 131.) "I know not, *says he*, whence it comes to pass, that Men love to make plain things obscure, and like nothing in Religion but Riddles and Mysteries. God indeed was pleas'd to institute a great many Ceremonies (and many of them of very obscure Signification) in the Jewish Worship, to awe their Childish Minds into a greater Veneration of his Divine Majesty. But in these last days, God

"hath

" hath sent his own Son into the World
 " to make a plain, and easy, and perfect
 " Revelation of his Will, to publish such
 " a Religion as may approve it self to our
 " Reason, and captivate our Affections by
 " its natural Charms and Beauties. And
 " there cannot be a greater Injury to the
 " Christian Religion, than to render it ob-
 " scure and unintelligible. And yet too
 " many there are, who despise every thing
 " which they understand, and think nothing
 " a sufficient Trial of their Faith, but
 " what contradicts the Sense and Reason of
 " Mankind.

Let us follow the Doctor a step further;
 he will discover to us the two Sources of
 that Abuse (*ubi sup.* p. 69, &c.) by making
 us observe; " That there are two ways of
 " expounding Scripture in great vogue a-
 " mong Men. First, by the sound and
 " clink of Words and Phrases, which is
 " all some Men understand; by *keeping a form*
 " *of sound Words.* Secondly, when this will
 " not do, they reason about the Sense of
 " Scripture from their own pre-conceived
 " Notions and Opinions, and prove that
 " this must be the meaning of Scripture,
 " because otherwise it is not reconcileable
 " to their Dreams, which is called expound-
 " ing Scripture by the *Analogy of Faith*. —
 " 'Tis no wonder, *says he*, if Men can ac-
 " commodate Scripture-Expressions to their
 " own Dreams and Fancies. For when
 " Mens Fancies are so possess'd with Shews
 " and Ideas of Religion, whatever they look
 " on appears of the same shape and colour,
 " wherewith their Minds are already tin-
 " cture'd; like a Man sick of the Jaundies,
 " or that look'd through a painted Glass,
 " who sees every thing of the same colour
 " that his Eye or Glass gives it. All the
 " Metaphors, and Similitudes, and Allego-
 " ries of Scripture are easily applied to
 " their purpose. And if any word sounds
 " like the tinkling of their own Fancies, it
 " is no less than a Demonstration that *that*
 " is the meaning of the Spirit of God; and
 " every little shadow and appearance doth
 " mightily confirm them in their pre-con-

" ceived Opinions. As *Plin.* observes of
 " the *Valentinians*, that they used one Arti-
 " fice or other to adapt all the Speeches of
 " our Saviour to, and all the Allegories of
 " Scripture, *malè composito Phantasmati,*
 " *to the ill-contriv'd Fagment of their own*
 " *Brain.* And thus the Minds of Men are
 " abused with Words and Phrases, and the
 " Scripture is prest to serve every new-
 " fangled conceit in Religion. The Doctor
 " goes on after the same rate, and I make no
 " doubt but you will like what remains to be
 " transcribed upon this Subject, nor could I
 " say any thing more suitable to the matter in
 " hand. " The wildest, *says he*, and most ex-
 " travagant Opinions that were ever yet
 " vented under the Name of Religion, have
 " pretended the Authority of Scripture for
 " their Patronage. Though any unpreju-
 " diced Man would wonder how the reading
 " such places of Scripture should suggest such
 " Notions to them. But this is no wonder,
 " when we consider that Men first contrive
 " their Religion, and possess their Fancy
 " thoroughly with their private Opinions,
 " and then read the Scripture with no other
 " design, than to find some thing there to
 " stamp Divinity on their own Conceits.
 " For it is easy to pervert the plainest
 " Sense, and by the help of a strange Im-
 " agination to make any thing of any thing.
 " Such Men dote upon Words and Phrases,
 " Metaphors and Allusions, as best fitted for
 " their purpose: They sound their Religion
 " on obscure Texts, or Mystical Interpre-
 " tations of plain Texts, and by the help
 " of some Arbitrary Distinctions and Limi-
 " tations, Glosses and Paraphrases, by cur-
 " tailing of Texts, or transplacing Words
 " or Comma's, or separating a single Sen-
 " tence from the Body of the Discourse,
 " make the Scripture speak their Sense as
 " plainly as the Bells ring what every Boy
 " would have them. — At this rate we may
 " find the Alcoran in the Bible, as well as
 " make so many Books so different and con-
 " trary to each other, from the various
 " Composition of twenty four Letters — All
 " the Mystery of those Men consists in
 " wrest-

wrestling Metaphorical and Allusive Expressions to a proper Sense. — He, who would be an honest Reader of Books, who hath no mind to turn every thing into Burlesque, ought carefully to distinguish between Proper and Allusive, or Metaphorical Expressions, to consider the use of Words and Phrases, and the great variety of Dialects, and the peculiar ways of speaking in every Language, and in every Age, and to use Metaphors no farther than their first Intention, without which we may deal by all Authors, as these Men deal by Scripture, make them speak Non-sense, or (as they use to call them) *conceivable Mysteries*, and overthrow and contradict their own Design. Thus, Sir, by wrestling to a proper Sense, the Allusion which *St. John* makes to the first Chapter of *Genesis*, they have found a great Mystery in meer Metaphorical Expressions, and the old Creation where the new is only intended. This short, but right and important Consequence, ought to indemnify me for the trouble which the reading of so long a Citation may have given you.

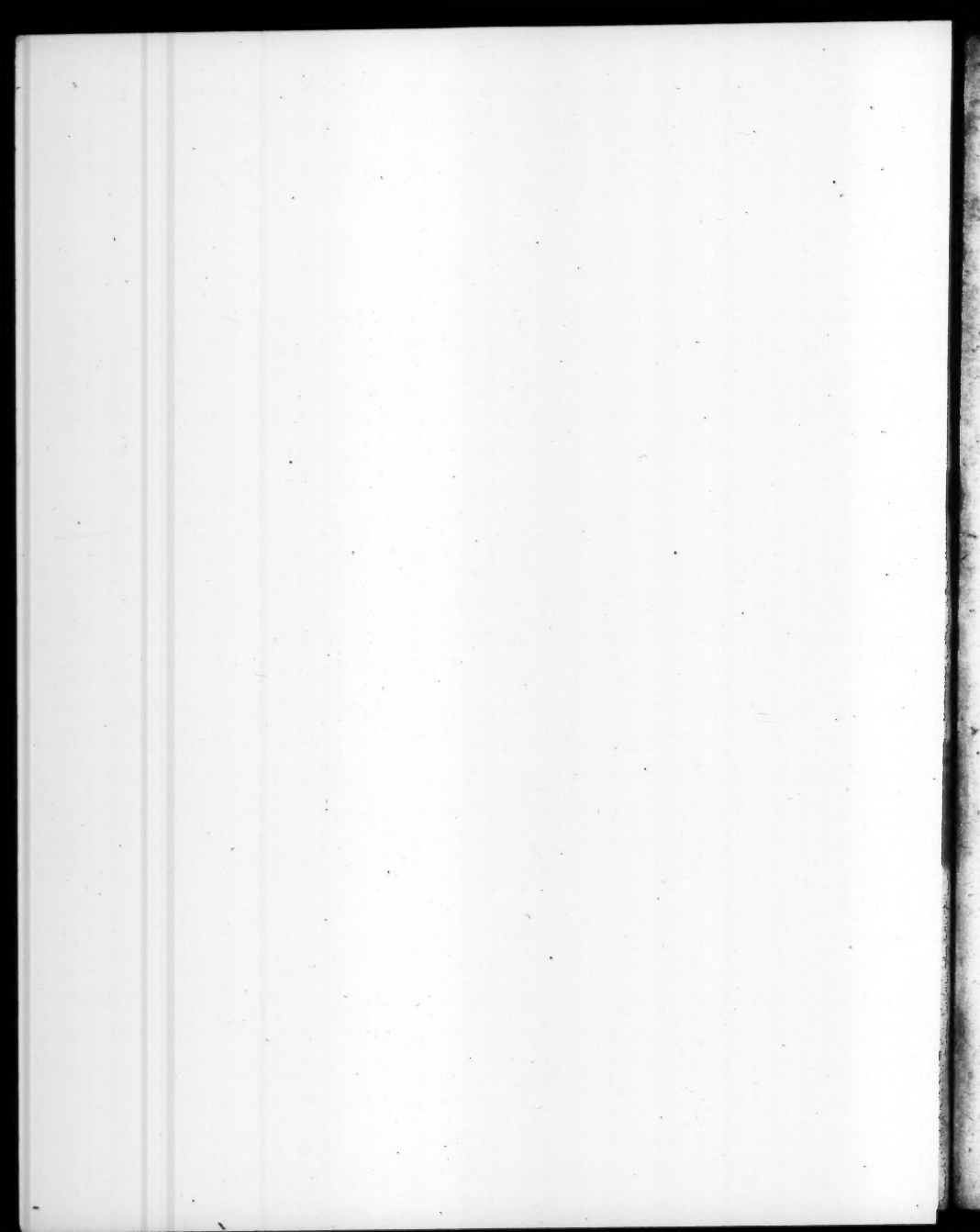
I know the Doctor in his *Vindication of the Trinity*, inveighs against the Hereticks who destroy Mysteries, and, as he thinks, do the Person of our Saviour a great Injury (as if Christianity were undone, unless Christ be the Supreme God.) But he has been formerly subject to the same Approaches, without being much moved with them. We may therefore easily vindicate our selves with his own words, and say, "That Christ has occasioned very great Mistakes in some Mens Divinity, who are very zealous to advance Christ's Person, to the Prejudice and Reproach of his Religion. The Foundation of their Riddles and Mysteries, is, that they make the Person of Christ almost the sole Object of the Christian Religion (*ib. p. 10.*) Those Men who talk so much of the Person and Personal Excellencies of Christ, frequently without any Sense, and generally without any just ground from Reason or Scripture, are very clamorous, and alarm the

World with extream Jealousies and Fears, as if there were a Party of Men started up, who design to make Christ useless, and to reduce Religion to its first natural State, which knew no Priest, nor Sacrifice, nor Mediator. It seems now that we have both the same Right with the Doctor, to believe that the Dissenters are ill-grounded in expounding literally of the Person of Christ, what is only meant of his Doctrine in a Metaphorical way; and I do believe that the Doctor himself has no ground to take in a literal sense for a second Person in the Godhead, what is only metaphorically said of that Person born of a Virgin, to whom the Father has imparted a Divine Power for the Work of the new Creation. One of the Dissenters, against whom he disputes, having said, *Pag. 138.* That *as there is an Union of Three Persons in One Nature in the Trinity, and of Two Natures in One Person in Christ, which is the Hypostatical Union; so the Mystical Union is an Union of Persons, where both Persons and Natures are distinct: the Doctor laughs at this Mystical Union. How so? Is not the Mystical Union of the Dissenters as well grounded in Scripture, as the Hypostatical Union of Two Natures, or the Essential Union of the Three Persons, which the Doctor thinks to be great Mysteries? And as for Reason, Is the word *Mystical* more affrighting than the word *Hypostatical*? Alas! they are Brethren, let them joyn Hands and live peaceably in the Kingdom of Dreams.*

This puts me in mind of a Reproach made unto us by a Papist, *viz.* That our Reformation has no certain Principle (*Consider, upon the Schism of the Priest.*) The Incomprehensibility of a Mystery, says he, is sometimes look'd upon among them as a Demonstration to condemn it; and sometimes it is a Character of Divinity, which makes it adorable. Sometimes the Letter of the Scripture is a sacred Authority which they cannot part with without committing a Sacrilege; and sometimes they look upon it as a Letter which killeth. Would to God this were an altogether ungrounded Reproach! We have no fixed Principle to

agree





agree about the Notion of a Mystery, and it seems we are rather determin'd to our choice by *Capricchio* or Interest, than by the Scripture. What? taking wisely the Scripture to be our Principle, have we adapted, for the expounding of it, this Maxim of Cardinal Cusanus, *Secundum currentia tempora scripturas esse interpretandas*, That the Scriptures ought to be interpreted according to the current of Times? When we dispute against the Dissemblers, we inveigh against Mystery at the very first Page of the Book, thus, (*ubi supr.*) "It happens too often in Matters of Religion, that Men consider nothing but the sound of Words, and from thence form such uncouth Ideas of Religion, as are fitted to the meanness of the Understandings, or gratify their Natural Genius or Disposition, or are calculated to serve an Interest. And thus the Gospel of our Saviour is defaced and obscured by affected Mysteries, and Paradoxes, and senseless Propositions. And Christ himself, who was the Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person, who in the most plain and perspicuous manner declared the Will of God to us, is represented with a thicker Vail upon his Face than Moses. And the Glory of the second Covenant is much more obscured with a Mist of Words, than the first was with Types and Figures. We add, that to unravel such Mysteries, we must expect the coming of Elias. But, what an Alteration is our Theology subject to, when we come to dispute afterwards against the Unitarians? We mention *Mystery* at the very Title of the Book, and we prejudice the Spirit of the Reader with it, *A Vindication of the Mystery of the Holy Trinity*. Afterwards we spread over those Doctrines a Cloud of Metaphysical and Barbarous Terms. What arises from this? This Inconvenience, viz. "That (*ubi supr.* p. 93.) such Arbitrary Notions do naturally force Men to pervert the Scriptures to make them speak the Orthodox Language. To this we owe all those nice and subtle Distinctions (*for Example, Self and Abso-*

lutus) which constitute the Body of Sy-
 "stematical Divinity, which commonly have
 "no other design than to elude the force of
 "Scripture, or to bribe it to speak on their
 "side. Thus we our selves fall into that pitiful Ridiculousness, which he had formerly condemned. This we may call, To cry down Mystery, till some other Interest will require the contrary.

Now, Sir, if I was willing to go on further in this Consideration, I should only insist upon all the Maxims made use of by Protestants against Transubstantiation, and oppose them to their own Mysteries. They have none that may be able to bear the Trial of such a Touch-stone. I shall only set down six of their Maxims, without making any particular Application of them, for that is out of my way.

1. That Reason is the Faculty whereby Revelations are to be discerned.
2. That all supernatural Revelations do suppose the truth of the Principles of Natural Religion.
3. That all Reasonings about Divine Revelations must necessarily be governed by the Principles of Natural Religion; that is, by those Approbations which Men naturally have of the Divine Perfections.
4. That nothing ought to be received as a Revelation from God, which plainly contradicts the Principles of Natural Religion, or overturns the Certainty of them.
5. That nothing ought to be received as a Divine Doctrine and Revelation, without good Evidence that it is so.
6. That no Argument is sufficient to prove a Doctrine or Revelation to be from God, which is not clearer and stronger than the Difficulties and Objections against it.

Now either these Maxims are false, and all applied to Transubstantiation; or, if there is any strength in them against that pretended Mystery, they overthrow at the same time all the Doctrines, which at this day go under that Name among Protestants. At least I do not see how any rational Man can deny such a Parity. They should do me a kindness to shew me, that those six Maxims do not hurt in the least the Mysteries of the Trinity, and of the Incarnation.

Now, Sir, be pleased to hear some weak Reasons alledged in the behalf of Mystery.

It is objected, that there are Mysteries in Nature, and most incomprehensible Truths; as for Example, The Union of our Soul with our Body; and consequently, that we must not wonder, if there are some too in the Deity and Religion. And if those, say they, though incomprehensible, yet are most certain, Why should we call into question the latter? I answer, that there is a vast difference between both. Those are only the Objects of our Curiosity, the search whereof no body is bound to, seeing that Enquiry is rather a Rashness, and an ill use of our Natural Light, which was given us in that respect only for the use of this Life both private and civil. But they will have these to be the Objects of our Faith and Religion, which ought to be the clearer and the more accessible to Reason, in that my Eternal Salvation is concerned in it, if I apprehend and embrace them; or my Eternal Misery, if I reject or do not apprehend them. Will God have me to conceive the Union of my Soul with my Body under pain of Death, or promise of Life? No certainly; but he is willing that I should have a right understanding of the Truths which I ought to believe, under the promise of Eternal Life, if I obey his Commands; and under the threatnings of Eternal Death, if I refuse to acquiesce in them. And consequently, he will have them to be proportionable to our Capacities: and indeed Religion ought to be clearer than those Metaphysical Objects. I confess that there are incomprehensible things, which yet are true, but I deny that they are such as do contradict our natural Ideas; I mean, those clear and certain Notions, for want of which I should not be capable of Religion; so that to be a Christian, I should cease to be a Man.

They distinguish to no purpose, the manner of the Mystery from the Mystery it self. This Distinction may hold in things which our Reason cannot apprehend, because it has not in it self the Ideas and the Proof thereof; as for Example, the manner of the Resurrection. But it is false and wrongly applied to those things which our Reason

cannot apprehend, because they contradict its most distinct and certain Ideas; as for Example, that three Divine Persons are but one God. Then the manner of the Mystery only is not to be called in question, since the Mystery in it self, propounded with its greatest Simplicity, is surrounded with Contradictions, which way soever it be viewed.

Moreover they will say, that the Mystery lies only in the Objects of Religion, but that the way of revealing them is clear and easy. But if the Revelation is so clear, Why do Men contrive new Words unknown to Scripture, to explain it more clearly? Divines are very happy to have found our Expressions more fit to express the Truths of God, than the Holy Ghost himself, who knows the deep things of God. And if the Objects are in themselves so obscure and unintelligible, why do they broach new Terms, to endeavour to make us understand that which is incomprehensible? Besides, how can a Book be accouned clear, which is easy to be understood in its Terms, but is altogether obscure in the Objects which it contains? Holy Obscurity! Lightome Darknes! The Words made use of to explain the Things are very clear, but the Things explained by those Words are very obscure: And what is more admirable, though the Words be very clear, yet we perceive thro' that Light, that the Things are very obscure; and though the Things be very obscure, yet thro' that Obscurity we perceive, that the Words are very clear. Thus they have found the way to reconcile Light with Darknes: This is a new kind of Oracles never heard of before. The Oracles of the false Gods contained things very intelligible in themselves, but expressed with obscure and equivocal Terms. On the contrary, those of the true God contain Truths incomprehensible and unintelligible in themselves, but expressed with clear and easy Terms. At this rate the ancient Fathers could not fairly inveigh so much against the Ambiguity and the Riddles of the Heathenish Oracles.

But after all, how come they to know that the Things are obscure, If the Words that teach

reach them are plain and easy? Or, how do they know that the Words are plain and easy, if the Things contained in them are obscure? Clear and easy Words in unintelligible Things are meer Words without Sense. And Things which are unintelligible, though expressed with plain and easy Words, are called a *Galemaufrey*: They pay a strange Honour to Scripture, by ascribing to it such Mysteries and such a Clearness. The Objects of that Book remaining still in the dark, the Book must needs be dark too, though the Words be never so clear. On the contrary, if I was to commend the Clearness of Scripture, without banishing that holy Obscurity which the Orthodox are so well pleased with, I would say that though most of its Terms be obscure and unusual in other Languages and other Books, yet the Things are so clear in it, at least as far as they are to be believed in order to Salvation, that the Evidence of those Objects mentioned in so many places, and grounded upon sensible Facts, takes off the Obscurity of certain Expressions which in themselves are very dark, because they pass from a Profane to a Divine Use, which is less natural to them. But this is not the right way to find Mysteries, and Men are resolved at any rate to have some covered with a dreadful and sacred Horror.

The Author of the *History of Oracles* has prettily said, that he who has never so little studied the Spirit of Men; knows what an Impression wonderful Things make upon it. Indeed, *Plato*, who is all over sublime and wonderful, became thereby a Philosopher in fashion among the Learned Christians of the first Ages, and the Agreeableness which they thought to perceive between his Philosophy and the Religion of Christ, caused them to look upon him as a kind of a Prophet, who had found out several important Matters of Christianity, especially the Trinity, which cannot be denied to be clearly contained in his Writings. Bewitched with such a monstrous Prejudice, we look upon his Works, as so many Commentaries upon Scripture, and fancy that the nature of the Word was such

as he fancied it to be. The Ancient first of all lay hold of this seeming Conformity, the Modern have followed them. Whatever was spoken by the Ancient, either good or bad, is obnoxious to frequent Repetitions; and what they were not able to make good themselves by sufficient Reasons, is now proved by their sole Authority. If they foresaw this, it was well to spare themselves the labour of an exact Reasoning. Those Prejudices being brought into Religion, found the way as it were to be confounded with it, and to get a Veneration which is due to it only. This Author clearly enough discovers to us the Source of Mystery springing out of the wonderful and incomprehensible Language of *Plato*, and at the same time the holy Reverence paid to Mysteries arising from a blind Respect paid to a false Antiquity. I add, that that which makes Mystery the more commendable, is the need Men stand in thereof to hide their Errors; for this is the last Hold whither they repair, when they are at a loss, and have nothing to say in their own defence. *Mystery* is a Supplement ready at hand, when we fall short of Reason. In a word, *Mystery* is a Salve for all Diseases. It dazles the Eyes of simple Men, or rather bewitches them in so great a measure, that by seeing they perceive not the Ridiculousness of the Opinions imposed upon their Belief, and it makes wise Men willingly to shut them; for they do not love to be disturbed in the Enjoyment of their Temporal Advantages, and are afraid of *Socrates* his Fare.

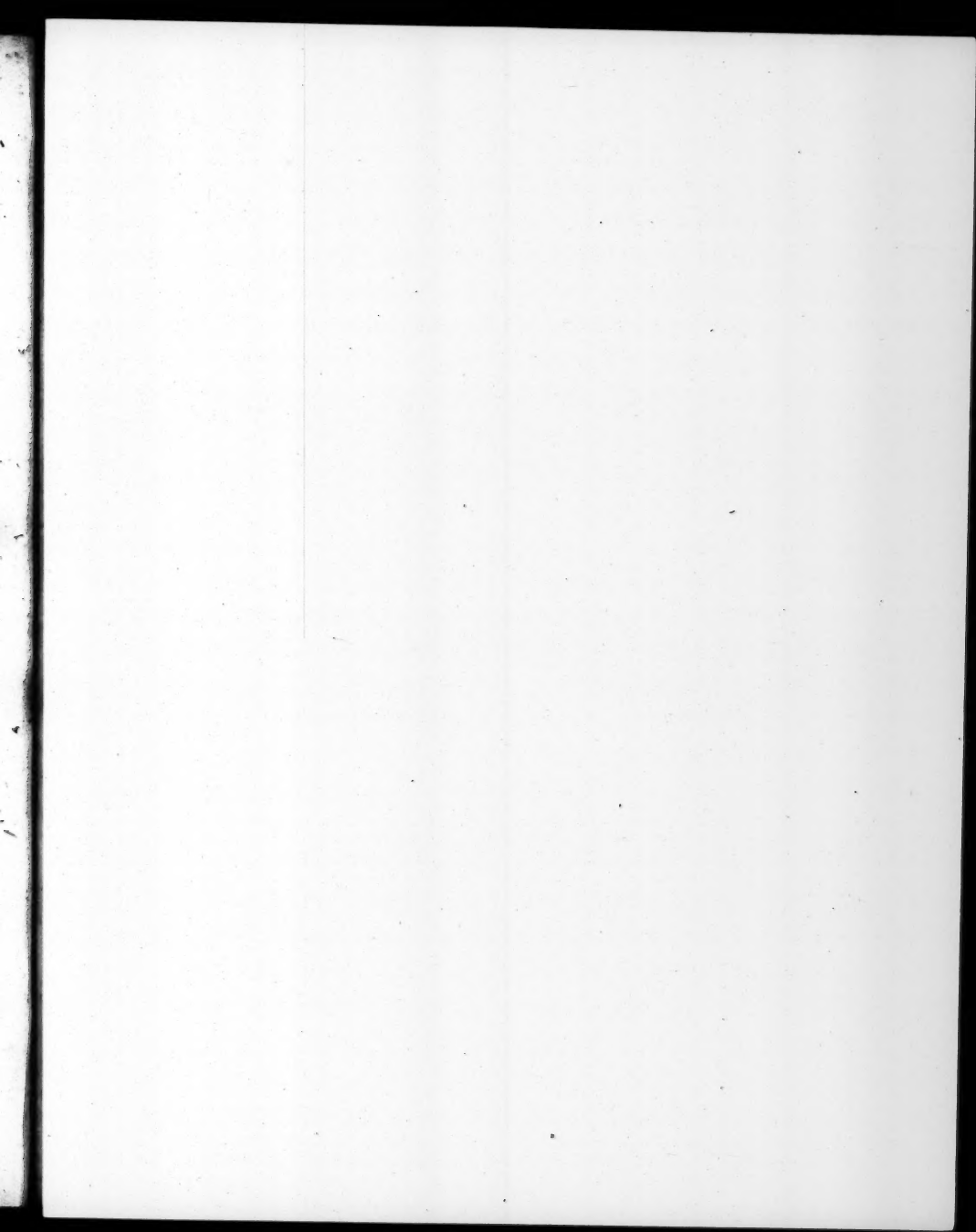
In the mean time I hope, Sir, we shall no more be troubled with this dreadful Word, and *Mystery* will be no longer in fashion, since Dr. *Shenlock* has so clearly and easily explained to us the Trinity, and a Papist a Friend of his who has well studied his System, has happily made use of it to uncover the whole Secret of Transubstantiation. *Self* and *Mutual-Conscience* are one of those Keys fit to open any Door, and which lays the Sense of the most abstruse Opinions so open to us, that those who after his opening, shall

be so bold as to call them Mysteries still, must be accounted very mean Divines, not to say Hereticks. I hope further, that when we shall ask Evidence and Reason in matters of Faith, they will no more cry out that it is to run down Mysteries, to form a plain and easy Religion. For at this rate the Doctor himself should be a great Destroyer of Mysteries, since he has made the Trinity (if we must believe him upon his word) a plain and easy Truth, free from Contradiction, and agreeable to Reason. Is not the Reasonableness of this Demand, and the Pretensions of Hereticks, justified by the many Endeavours that are used, to take off the Difficulties of this Mystery, and to make it parallel with the most common Doctrines, which are neither wonderful, nor incomprehensible? I perceive what this is. The Name of *Mystery* is only a *provisory* Title bestowed upon the Trinity, till some other System be found out, whereby it may be made clearer and more agreeable to Reason. It may be the Doctor is that blessed Christian, to whom Heaven had reserved the Discovery thereof. If it be so, the Hereticks will be convinced of Error, but at least they shall enjoy the pleasure of seeing Mystery falling down, and of being satisfied about the Evidence and the Reasonableness which they ask.

Besides, the Papists will be able at the same time to shew us the possibility of Transubstantiation. Or, if we will lay aside the Papists, we may make use of the Hypothesis of the *Ubiquitarians* or *Latrans*, who are our Brethren, and apply the Doctor's Philosophy therewith. They will easily shew us, that it implies no Contradiction. For the eternal Word of God being present every where, the Body which he assumed to himself by Personal Union, is present every where; not that it is divided and separated by infinite Parts, but because it is united to an Infinite Mind. And tho we should suppose as many sacred *Hosfs* as there are Altars in the World, yet there is but one Body of Christ; those sacred *Hosfs* being numerically One by reason of their

Mutual Sensation with one another, and with the Original Body of Christ, which is in Heaven. "But that this may not be thought a meer Arbitrary and groundless Conjecture, I shall shew you that this is the true Scripture-Notion of the Plurality of *Sacramental Bodies* in one Natural Body. When Christ delivered the Bread to his Disciples, he told them, *This is my Body*; not my Bodies, but my Body: as for Example, he told Peter, *This is my Body*; he told James, *This is my Body*; he told John, *This is my Body*; yet there are not three Bodies, but one Body. (ib. p. 82.) "Each *Hof* is the Body of Christ, for each *Hof* hath the whole and entire Operations of the Body, having by this *Mutual Sensation* the other *Hosfs* in it self; so that each *Hof* is in some sense the whole Plurality of the *Hosfs* by their In-being and In-dwelling. The Body delivered to James is in the Body delivered to Peter; and the Body delivered to Peter is in the Body delivered to James; and the Body delivered to John is in the Bodies delivered to Peter and James; and the Bodies delivered to Peter and James are in the Body delivered to John; and therefore if that Trinity of *Hosfs* delivered to Peter and James and John be the Body, the *Hof* of Peter is the Body, the *Hof* of James is the Body, the *Hof* of John is the Body, they being all mutually in each other; and yet this is a plain Demonstration that they are not three Bodies, but one Body, because neither of them is the one *Essential* Body, but as thus intimately united to all the rest, and then they can be all three but one *Essential* Body. Natural Reason teaches nothing about the *Sacramentality* of the Body-head; it teaches one Body, but whether this one Body be one or many *Sacramental Bodies*, it says not. And therefore it may be either without contradicting the Natural Notions we have of one Body. And then there is free scope for Revelation: And if Revelation teaches that there is but one *Essential* Body, and that there are

Vindic. of the Myst. of the Holy Trin. p. 50.





are many *Sacramental Bodies*, each of which in Scripture have not only the Title, but the Nature and Attributes of the Body ascribed to them, then we must of necessity believe a *Plurality* in *Unity*; many *Sacramental Bodies* in one *Essential Body*. For what the Scripture affirms, and Reason does not deny, is a proper Object of our Faith. And then the Objection against this Faith, that these many *Sacramental Bodies* must be many distinct *Bodies*, if each of them is the *Body*, is senseless and ridiculous. For it is demonstrable, that if there be many *Sacramental Bodies*, and one *Essential Body*, each *Sacramental Body* must be the *Body*; and yet there cannot be many distinct *Bodies*, but one *Body*. For if each *Sacramental Body* be not the *Body*, all cannot be the *Body*, unless the *Body-head* have *Sacramental* and *Personal Bodies* in it, which are not the *Body*; and if all are but one *Essential Body*, they cannot be many distinct *Bodies*. So that all the Absurdities and Contradictions are vanished only into Nicodemus his Question, *How can these things be?* The right Answer is, God knows. Must we deny things that we cannot conceive and comprehend, though it be expressly taught by God himself? Must we deny what we read in the Bible to be there, because Reason does not reach it, and cannot frame an Adequate Idea of it? (*ib.* p. 180.) If you say that the *Sacramental Bodies* are not the one *Essential Body*, as the *Original Body* which is in Heaven, is. I answer, That neither the *Original Body*, nor the *Sacramental* and *Begotten Bodies* considered separately from each other, are the one *Essential Body*; they being only *Personal Bodies*, both the *Original* and *Sacramental Ones*; but the *Original* and *begotten Bodies* considered as united to each other by Mutual Consciousness, is the one *Essential Body*.

Thus, Sir, an *Ubiquitarian* will prove the Possibility of his Mystery by Dr. Sherlock's Philosophy. But it may be Dr. Wallis is the Man most fit to demonstrate this Possibility,

and that it is better proved from *Mathematical Ideas* than *Plato's*. Let us suppose further that it is so; an *Ubiquitarian* will not dislike this neither. For if the Doctor can rightly make use of the three Dimensions of Matter to take away the Contradictions which seem to be contained in the Trinity, why shall not an *Ubiquitarian* be allowed to make use of the Idea of the Divisibility of Matter to Infinity, to resolve the Objections that are made against him about the Divisibility and the Ubiquity of Christ's Body upon many Altars at the same time? He may answer, that, as a Cube may be divided in infinitum, and yet the Matter divided loses none of its Dimensions, every part having still the Essential Properties of Matter, the Length, the Breadth, and the Thickness. Thus the *Original Body* of Christ may be multiplied into a Million of other *Sacramental* and *Personal Bodies*, without losing any of its Essential Properties, not even its Unity: There being no Contradiction that a *Body Hypostatically* united to an Infinite Spirit, should be where-ever that Spirit is; or that a *Body*, to which the Bread is *Hypostatically* united, should be with respect to the Substance where-ever the Bread is. So that though there be but one Christ, yet there are many Bodies, and those many Bodies are *numus, non unus*.

* These many, who are one * Dr. Wall. " what, or many *somewhats*, third Let. " are but one Christ. For these " *somewhats* are called *Bodies* in a *Metaphorical* manner, whereby we mean no more, " but somewhat analogous therunto: And " which (because of such Analogy) we " so call, as knowing no better words to " use instead thereof. And therefore there " is but one Christ, though there may be " many *Sacramental* and *Personal Bodies*, " because the same Christ may be said to " sustain divers Persons, and those Persons " to be the same Christ, that is the same " Christ as sustaining divers Capacities, *Personalities*, *Sacramentalities*, *Corporalities*; " as is said of Tully, *Ego solus tres Personas sustinuo, meam, adversarii, & Judicis*. And " all

“all People, that can tell Money, know that
 “twelve Pence are but an Shilling; every
 “Rash that can make Bread knows that many
 “Grains of Corn make but one Ear; and what
 “in one Consideration is many, may in
 “another Consideration be but one. So
 true it is, that with never so little Philo-
 sophy, and by the means of a Comparison of
 three Grats and one Shilling, the meanest
 Flow-man may see clearly into the darkest
 Mysteries. But, alas! we are Christians,
 and yet we expound Revelation by the
 Principles which Philosophy affords us; and
 we endeavour to find in it such things as may
 support our Prejudices, without examining
 whether the Sacred Writers were Philoso-
 phers; or, suppose they were, whether
 they followed *Cartesius*, *Aristotle*, or *Plato*'s
 Ideas; or, whether they were Mathemat-
 cians. Must all our Disputes, even the most
 material, depend only upon mere Metaphy-
 sicks, and that by running our selves into
 Mysteries, we fall into such a Confusion
 of Words, and incomprehensible Notions,
 whereby that Divine Light, which ought
 to enlighten the most simple Men, is alto-
 gether darkned? No, the Holy Ghost's
 Intenz was not to make us Philosophers,
 he always accommodates himself to our
 most common Ideas, and the Expressions of
 Scripture, which seem to have occasioned
 the Notion of a Mystery, are only Figures,
 and Expressions common either to our
 Style, or the time wherein it was written.
 The only sign of its usefulness and scope
 will convince us of its Simplicicity and Clear-
 nets.

1. It was given us to excite and preserve
 among Men the Natural Principles of Mora-
 lity and Religion, which Nature or the Uni-
 versal Tradition has ingrafted in their Hearts.
 And how could it confirm to us the Truth
 of those Natural Notions, and even streng-
 then them by a new Light, if the first
 Duty which is imposed upon us, did con-
 sist in calling into Question our clearest
 Notions, and our most certain Principles?
 For Example, When I hear Men talk of

a God, or of one sole God, I have a Na-
 tural Idea of those two words, *One* and
God, and this Idea is common both to me
 and all Men, who are come to the know-
 ledge of one God. Shall we believe that
 Scripture speaks a new Language, that it
 may not be understood, when it speaks of
 one sole God, and that it requires from
 me a confused and uncertain Faith, which
 is only grounded upon so subtle and slip-
 pery Ideas, as the quickest Imagination can-
 not attain? The Name of God can be
 ascribed to none but in a proper or figu-
 rative way (for as to the Metaphysical and
 Mystrious Sense, it is neither the Language
 of God, nor of Angels, nor of Men, as
 such, I mean, as they have not corrupted
 their Mind by an unnatural Study.) In a
 proper Sense the Supreme Being goes un-
 der that Name by reason of its Nature:
 In a figurative Sense Christ has this Name
 bestowed upon him by reason of his Power
 and Authority. Those two Senses are so
 clear and so often reiterated in Scripture,
 and at the same time so agreeable with
 our Notions, that one must have only his
 Eyes and a New Testament to be convinced
 thereof.

2. Revelation was given us to abridge
 our Studies and Enquiries, by making easy
 to us the knowledge of our Happiness, and
 the means whereby we may be fitted to
 attain to it. I confess Philosophers might
 have clearer Notions about this Point than
 simple Men, if we must come to it by long
 Reasonings: But since Revelation made
 those Truths common to those who cannot
 reach to an exact Reasoning, the meanest
 Men have as much knowledge about this
 matter, as the most learned can have.
 For Example, One might know by Nature
 and Reasoning, the Justice, the Goodness,
 and the Power of God in rewarding just
 Men: One might also from God's general
 Promises infer by several Consequences the
 particular Reward of the Resurrection of
 the Dead. Thus *Abraham* by Reasoning
 concluded that God might raise his Son
 from

from the Dead, whereas yet he had no formal and particular Promise (*Augustinus*, *Epistola* 82, *Heb.* 11. 39.) Thus also our Saviour argues against the *Sadducees* about that general Promise, *I am the God of Abraham, &c.* from whence he infers the Resurrection of those Patriarchs. But now adays we have so clear and so express a Revelation about the Truths of our Salvation, that the most simple Men can apprehend them without reasoning, so far are they from standing in need of flying to Philosophical and Speculative Distinctions. In this new Covenant which God has contracted with the House of *Jacob* according to the Promise of *Jeremiah*, no body needs to enquire from his Brother, his Neighbour, &c. after what manner the Lord ought to be known and worshipped; for *we are all taught of God*, who has put his Word *nigh us*, &c. i. e. it is so agreeable to our Capacities, that to know the *only true God*, and *Jesus Christ whom he has sent* (*which is our Eternal Life*) we need to consult neither the *School-men*, nor *Dr. Sherlock*, nor *Dr. Wallis's* Notions, nor the Distinction of *Essence and Persons*, or of *Self and Mutual-Consciousness*, or of the *three Capacities* with respect to *three Dimensions* of a *Cube*. We have no more to do, than to open the Gospel, to frame a distinct Faith of *one sole God the Father, Maker of Heaven and Earth*, who sent his Son to us, and of *one Lord Jesus Christ*, whom the Father has highly exalted, by giving him a Name which is above every Name, &c.

God, who will have all Men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of his Truths, has made his Revelation so intelligible, as to make it plain and easy to all Men, as well to Idiots, as to the most subtle Philosophers. Therefore it is, God never uses any Term to teach us his Mysteries, but what we have a clear and distinct Idea of. All that he requires from us is, that we should spiritualize those Notions, when the Terms made use of by him are taken from Earthly Things; or that we should suit

our Notions to the Nature of the Objects which he speaks of, when the words used by him are borrowed from a kind of things more sublime and excellent. In the first respect he makes use of the Terms, *Water, Bread, Light*, &c. to represent his Doctrine; Terms whereof we have a clear Notion in the sense of *washing*, of *nourishing*, and of *enlightning*, wherein they are used. And that first Notion, though it be gross, yet if it be distinct, is like the Foundation of the other Spiritual Notion, which God lays upon it. In the second respect, the Scripture attributes the Name of *God* to Kings, Angels, and the *Messiah*, calls us the *Sons of God*, says that we are *Partakers of the Divine Nature*, &c. Terms whereof we may have a most clear Idea, in the sense of *Power*, of *Holiness*, and of *Immortality*, wherein they are used; so we fit that Idea, which is borrowed from an Infinite Nature, to the Nature of Finite Objects, whereto it is applied. As to Metaphysical Terms of *Essence, Personality*, and *Consubstantiality*, the Scripture hath not liked to make use of them, because they have not a fixed sense, and are not universally understood. And as we have no Natural Notions of them, they are not able to raise us from our Earthly Conceptions, to a Divine and Spiritual Knowledge, nor to bring us from the Idea of God's Perfections, to the Idea of the Virtues, which he imparts to his most excellent Creatures.

However, Sir, though that Philosophical Gibberish be never so trifling, yet it made long ago the Language of Scripture useless, under pretence of giving a fuller sense of our Mysteries. But if the Lovers of Mysteries pretend, that what they call Faith, ought to destroy Reason, and our Natural Notions: I cannot see why the Persecutors may not pretend, that what they call Zeal, ought to take off Natural Piety? Thus, on one hand, false Zeal; and on the other, mysterious Absurdities, shall utterly extinguish the Light of the Mind, and the Tender-
ness

ness of Nature; so that at last we may prove to be without Scripture and Conscience, unless God prevents us in his Mercy; and under the Name of Christians, we shall cease to be Men, and be like Beasts

without Understanding and Compassion. *May God Almighty, who is rich in Mercies, preserve unto us his simple Truth, which shall make us free from Error and Sin!*

I am, Sir,

Your most obliged Servant.

F I N I S.

